

Health Brief

Quitting Tobacco



The more you know about health issues—and your own health in particular, the better you can take care of yourself. This *Health Brief* provides basic health information. To learn more about this topic, please consult your doctor or pharmacist.



If you smoke or use another form of tobacco (cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, or snuff), one of the best things you can do for yourself is to quit—now! Within only 20 minutes of stopping, for example, your body begins reaping the benefits with lowered blood pressure.

With all the benefits of *not* using tobacco, why do more than 47 million people in the United States continue to do so? As anyone who uses tobacco and has tried quitting knows, it's not easy to quit. There are so many psychological and physical factors that cause people to continue using tobacco; simply knowing that tobacco use is bad for one's health and quitting is good may not be reason enough to inspire people to quit. If you are considering quitting your tobacco habit, you need to find reasons that will personally motivate *you* when it becomes difficult to resist this incredibly addictive habit.

Want to learn more about quitting tobacco?

Read on for tips on getting motivated, the health benefits of quitting, planning and preparing to quit, treatment options that can help you quit, and resources you can use in your fight against nicotine addiction—one of the strongest addictions to break.

What Motivates You?

Some people who use tobacco are best motivated to quit by what may best be referred to as “scare tactics”—how their health might suffer if they don't quit (potential lung cancer, heart disease, and more—even more wrinkled skin!). Others prefer to concentrate on the benefits of quitting (improved stamina during exercise, for example, or saving money from not spending it on tobacco). Some people do better to think about long-term quitting, while others need to focus on getting past the next two minutes without tobacco. Only *you* can find the spark that motivates you. The factors that lead you to stop using tobacco initially may change as you seek ways to resist the temptation of tobacco.

Whether this is your first or fifth attempt at quitting, arming yourself with proven tobacco-quitting ideas and alternate behaviors can help you stay strong when the cravings hit.

Why Bother Quitting?

Not only does the U.S. Surgeon General warn that tobacco use causes lung cancer, heart disease, and emphysema, there are some pretty grim statistics out there:

- More than 400,000 people die each year of smoking-related diseases in the United States.¹
- Secondhand smoke is classified as a known carcinogen and is responsible for approximately 90 percent of lung cancer deaths annually.²
- Smoking, smoking-related illnesses, and lost productivity related to smoking cost the United States more than \$150 billion annually.²

People who use tobacco may read this bad-news information and think, “Why bother quitting if the damage is already done?” The good news is, according to the U.S. Surgeon General: “Quitting tobacco use greatly reduces serious risks to your health.” In fact, the health benefits you receive by *not* using tobacco begin within 20 minutes of your last use. And the longer you remain tobacco free, the more potential health benefits you may experience. (See Table 1.)

In addition to the considerable health benefits related to quitting, consider all the personal, social, and financial rewards: from feeling empowered and having fresher-smelling breath and clothes to saving money—not only from *not* buying tobacco, but also from potentially fewer tobacco use-related medical problems.

Deciding Why to Quit

Get started by writing out some of the reasons why you want to quit. Your list can include personal, health, social, or financial reasons. Some of your comments might be the same as these:

- I want to gain control over my habit.
- I don’t want my family or other loved ones to have to care for me if I develop an illness I could have prevented.
- I would save \$XX/day/week/month/year and could afford to buy _____.
- I’m tired of worrying about my health.
- I don’t want to subject anyone around me to secondhand smoke and related illnesses.

Put copies of your list in places you’ll see throughout the day. Make it a dynamic list; update it as you think of more reasons to quit.

Table 1: Physical Changes Associated with Quitting Tobacco

Time Since Quitting	Health Benefits
20 minutes	Blood pressure decreases, heart rate drops, and body temperature of hands and feet increases.
8 hours	Oxygen levels in blood increase to normal.
24 hours, or “first day”	Chance of heart attack decreases.
48 hours	Nerve endings start to regrow; senses of taste and smell improve.
2 weeks to 3 months	Circulation improves, walking becomes easier, and lung function increases.
1 month to 9 months	Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath decrease.
1 year	Risk of coronary heart disease is decreased to half that of someone who uses tobacco.
5 years	From 5 to 15 years after quitting, stroke risk is reduced to that of people who have never smoked.
10 years	Risk of lung cancer decreases 50% compared to those who continue to smoke.
15 years	Risk of coronary heart disease is now similar to that of people who have never used tobacco; risk of death returns to nearly the level of people who have never used tobacco.

Source: American Lung Association; www.lungusa.org/tobacco/quit_ben.html. “What Are the Benefits of Quitting Smoking?” Accessed January 2004.

Deciding When to Quit

You're the only one who can truly decide not only *why* to quit, but *when* to quit. Aside from being forced to stop suddenly, as with a medical emergency or surgery, picking a Quit Date puts you in control. Think carefully about when you may find it easiest to quit. Certain times of the year might be unusually hard for you; for example, holidays—even without quitting—can be very stressful for many people. They may be a great time to decide to quit, but not a good time to actually quit. Instead, choose a time period when you will not be under a lot of stress.

Perhaps you'd find it helpful to select increasing periods of time to remain tobacco-free, for example, to make it through several hours without using tobacco. Psychologically, setting temporary quit goals may increase your feelings of control. Twelve-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous use a "day at a time" philosophy for quitting addictions. This works well for quitting tobacco use—even five minutes at a time...whatever it takes.



When you reach your goal, create a new goal with a longer period of time during which you will stay tobacco free: two days, one week, one month. Reward yourself for your successes. As your timeframes increase in duration, your withdrawal symptoms may have subsided and your daily routine may have changed enough that you actually are living your life without tobacco.

Nicotine addiction is powerful; in fact, it is one of the strongest addictions to break. Until your cravings subside, every hour or every day can be a challenge. If you slip and use tobacco, though, it's no different than cheating on a diet. "Slipping" is not what you set out to do, but you *can* get back on track. The most important thing is to remember to stay on course and remain positive about leading a tobacco-free life.

Getting Ready to Quit

Once you know why and when you want to quit, begin thinking about what factors—called triggers—might make it hard for you to resist using tobacco. For many people, tobacco triggers include driving, stress, social events, sports, drinking, the after-dinner cup of coffee, and/or being around others who use tobacco. Identifying *your* own triggers is the first step in avoiding them or learning to compensate when the quitting process becomes difficult.

To keep your mind off using tobacco:

- do something else—go for a walk, write a letter, or call a friend.
- throw away all tobacco-related items, including cigarette cases, humidors, ashtrays, and lighters.
- reward yourself for not using tobacco. Give yourself a verbal pat on the back, go out to a movie, indulge in an extra hour of reading a book—whatever acknowledges your success and feels like a healthy treat.

Deciding How to Quit

Although some people are able to quit using tobacco "cold turkey," others find it helpful to use medication designed to aid in quitting. Talk with your doctor to determine if one of these therapies is right for you. (See Table 2.)

Most medication therapies are used for 10 to 12 weeks under a doctor's supervision. The body needs all this time to break its strong addiction to nicotine. Even if you think you have broken your addiction, it is important to continue taking your

Table 2: Treatment Options to Help Quit Tobacco

Medication Type	Brand Name(s)	Advantages	Disadvantages
Nicotine gum	Nicorette®	Convenient, flexible dosing	Must be used many times throughout the day; peppery taste; may cause stomach upset
Nicotine inhaler	Nicotrol® Inhaler*	Use similar to smoking a cigarette	Must be used many times throughout the day; may cause mouth irritation
Nicotine lozenge	Commit®	Fast, convenient	May cause stomach upset
Nicotine nasal spray	Nicotrol® NS*	Quick-acting, flexible dosing; reduces cravings within minutes	May irritate nose and eyes; must be used many times throughout the day
Nicotine patch	Nicoderm® CQ® Nicotrol® Habitrol®	Easy dosing and convenient, once-a-day application	May irritate skin; dosing less flexible than other nicotine replacement methods
Tablet	ZYBAN® (bupropion)	Pill form, easy to use, few side effects; can be used with nicotine replacement or while smoking since medicine contains no nicotine	Should not be used by patients with seizure disorders; user may experience dry mouth and have difficulty sleeping

medication for the full time prescribed. Without your medication, you may have stronger cravings.

One popular medication option is called *nicotine replacement therapy*, which involves slowly reducing the amount of nicotine your body receives. Gradually withdrawing from nicotine makes it easier to quit. Nicotine replacement is available in several forms: over-the-counter gum, patch, and lozenge, and prescription inhaler and nasal spray. Since nicotine replacement therapy contains nicotine, it is important that you have completely quit using tobacco before you begin using a nicotine replacement product.

Another medication used to help quit tobacco use is bupropion (also known by the brand name ZYBAN®), which works on the biological addiction by reducing the pleasure a person gets from using tobacco. Unlike nicotine replacement therapy, ZYBAN does not contain nicotine and is available only with a doctor's prescription. ZYBAN is taken while you are still using tobacco. Depending upon your doctor's directions, you will continue taking ZYBAN for seven to 12 weeks *after* your last tobacco use, to help

overcome cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

Taking Advantage of the “Social Climate”

Using tobacco continues to be less and less socially acceptable. And you can use that to your advantage while you're quitting—and after. Some people find it easier to quit by frequenting the increasing number of places where smoking is prohibited and avoiding places where smoking is allowed.

According to the American Lung Association, “Workplaces nationwide are going smoke free to provide clean indoor air and to protect employees from the life-threatening effects of secondhand smoke.”² In addition, many restaurants and airports do not allow smoking anywhere on the premises since other patrons prefer not to be exposed to secondhand smoke.

Dealing with Weight Gain

Many people who quit using tobacco do indeed gain some weight. In fact, it's very common to gain a few pounds after quitting. After quitting, the body metabolizes food more slowly. Also, many people satisfy their nicotine cravings with food, or

they use food to replace the oral habit (and satisfaction) of using tobacco.

Don't be too concerned if you add a few pounds during this time. The health benefits of giving up tobacco far outweigh the health drawbacks of a few extra pounds. Making positive lifestyle changes, such as beginning an exercise routine and watching what you eat, can help.

These tips can help you avoid unwanted pounds:

- Follow a well-balanced diet that includes protein and carbohydrates, and is low in fat.
- Stay physically active. You don't need a hard aerobic workout (although, if you are accustomed to doing one, by all means continue). Simply taking the stairs or walking after lunch or dinner can help to keep the weight off, as well as help raise self-esteem and lift your mood.
- Weigh yourself weekly.
- Snack on low-calorie, low-fat foods: carrots, apples, pretzels, whole-wheat crackers, unbuttered popcorn, raisins, and sugarless gum—even a lollipop.

If at First You Don't Succeed...

If you've tried to quit using tobacco before and were unsuccessful, sure, you may feel frustrated. But, don't get discouraged, and *don't give up*. You are not alone; many people who have successfully quit did so only after several attempts. When you decide you are ready to try quitting again, try these suggestions:

- **Set a new date to quit.** The sooner you make another attempt at quitting, the better your chances of succeeding. If you need a refill of your over-the-counter or prescription aids, take care of that. Let family and friends know about your new Quit Date, so they can give you the encouragement and support you need to make this attempt successful.
- **Remember *why* you quit in the first place.** What was your motivating factor? Your health? To save money? To feel better about yourself? Focus on all the reasons you decided to quit, write them

down again (or pull out that first list you made), and keep them in a place where you will see them throughout the day.

• **Think about your most recent quit attempt.**

What do you think led you to start using tobacco again? Was it any of the triggers you identified—and could not successfully avoid? If possible, avoid those trigger situations. Were your nicotine cravings too strong? Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about a possible alternative quitting medication. Think of some other ways to cope with cravings.



Quitting for Good—Your Good

Even after you quit using tobacco, you may experience nicotine cravings from time to time. Do *not* let those cravings get the best of you. Remind yourself why you quit and how hard you worked to be successful. Just one “slip” could lead you back to using tobacco again. Develop ways to deal with these cravings:

- Rely on your friends and family to get you through cravings and stressful times. Sometimes a “buddy” can help—a designated person who agrees to be available to offer support and encouragement, and will try to convince you to not use tobacco. Your quitting buddy might even be someone else trying to quit or someone who has successfully kicked the habit.
- Avoid situations that may tempt you to start using tobacco again. Being prepared can help you to remain strong and tobacco free.
- Congratulate yourself for each day you remain tobacco free.

- Use relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, to relieve stress—which could lead you to use tobacco.

Conclusion

More than 46 million people in this country have quit smoking and using other forms of tobacco. Armed with the right information and tools, you, too, can join the ranks of those who have quit and be on your way to improving your health. The resources listed below can provide further information. Most important, remember that even if you are not successful with your first quit attempt—don't give up. Keep trying, and do seek the advice of your doctor.

Resources

The following organizations can help you in your efforts to quit using tobacco. Most of these groups offer free information. You can also go online to find a quitting buddy or find support groups through local chapters of the American Lung Association or your local hospital.

- **American Cancer Society**
1-800-ACS-2345 (1-800-227-2345)
www.cancer.org
- **American Lung Association**
1-800-LUNG USA (1-800-586-4872)
www.lungUSA.org
- **National Cancer Institute**
1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)
www.nci.nih.gov

- **American Heart Association**
1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721)
www.americanheart.org
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
1-800-CDC-1311 (1-800-232-1311)
www.cdc.gov

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